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AUTHOR Tse, Lucy
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ABSTRACT

This book examines often-cited but poorly-supported claims that immigrants fail to learn English and the mistaken belief that immigrant communities cling to their heritage languages, revealing that, in actuality, English is being rapidly learned while heritage languages are disappearing quickly from family use. The book shows how current assumptions have a pervasive influence on U.S. language policy. The six chapters include the following: (1) "Why Don't They Learn English?: Language Policy and Public Perception" (official English-language amendments and education sanctions); (2) "The State of English-Language Learning" (who U.S. immigrants are, whether immigrants and their children are learning English, why some students learn English faster than others, and obstacles to learning English); (3) "The State of Heritage Language Development" (the typical life of an immigrant language, causes of language loss, and the myth of language ghettos); (4) "Why Promote Heritage Languages" (benefits of heritage language development, consequences of heritage language loss, and support for foreign versus heritage language programs); (5) "How Can Heritage Languages be Promoted?" (language exposure and group membership, providing language exposure in heritage language programs, and promoting group membership in heritage language programs); and (6) "Where Do We Go from Here?" (Contains 178 references.) (SM)



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